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SUBJECT: CABINET SECRETARY-GENERAL PREDICTS THAKSIN WILL
RESIGN AFTER ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce reason 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) The Ambassador spoke on March 28 with Cabinet Secretary-General Bowornsak Uwanoo. Bowornsak was critical

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of the opposition PAD leaders, especially Sondhi Limthongkul and Chamlong Srimuang, for trying to force the King to intervene and resolve the political impasse. He complained that the PAD leaders were trying to induce the PM to use force to end the demonstrations, and thus provoke a crisis that would bring down the government. The government, however, would not resort to force.

¶2. (C) Bowornsak then volunteered that, after the election on April 2, he expected the PM to seek an audience with the King and "ask the King's opinion." Thaksin would then decide to step down for a period, during which political reforms could be undertaken. In fact, Bowornsak said, "perhaps a decision has already been made," but the PM had to have the election first, before he would consider stepping down. "Things will be all right after the vote," Bowornsak assured the Ambassador.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador raised the question of the extent of political reform needed. Bowornsak said that while PAD leaders like Sondhi and Chamlong are apparently advocating for a new constitution entirely, many in the opposition believe that only a few changes are needed. The reform process would not take a long time. The Ambassador asked about the threat of asset seizure. Wouldn't this threat encourage Thaksin to cling to his position in order to better protect his fortune? Bowornsak found this argument unconvincing. The courts would have to first find Thaksin guilty of a crime before there could be any threat to his assets, and there was no evidence that Thaksin had committed a crime.

¶4. (C) Comment: We have heard predictions of this scenario from a number of other sources: Thaksin wants the vindication of a big vote for him on Sunday, and would then be able to step down from a strong position, and plan to return to politics after things cool down for him. Bowornsak predicting it is significant, because he is an intimate Thaksin advisor. We believe that Bowornsak is not idly speculating in discussing this scenario. He sounded like he was quite sure that things would play out as he anticipated, and he is in a good position to have the inside scoop. However, even if the PM has mapped out this strategy, he may still change his mind, or be influenced by others to harden his position after the election. Nothing will be certain until the mercurial PM makes his decision public. End comment.

